

REMARKS

Applicants have the following response to the Office Action of September 13, 2004. In order to clarify the claimed invention and to correct minor informalities in the claims, Applicants are canceling Claims 22-25 and adding new Claims 26-29.

Applicants will now address each of the Examiner's objections and rejections in the order in which they appear in the Office Action.

Specification

In the Office Action, the Examiner objects to the specification for informalities and is requesting that the specification be checked for minor errors and that page 1 be amended to include the patent number of the parent application. Applicants have amended page 1 herein to add the patent number of the parent application. The undersigned is also in the process of reviewing and correcting minor errors in the specification. As soon as that is finished, the undersigned will file those corrections.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that this objection be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §112

The Examiner also rejects Claim 25 under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In particular, the Examiner states that the phrase "the halftone phase shift mask blank" in lines 1-2 of the claim is lacking an antecedent basis. As explained above, Applicants have canceled Claims 22-25 and added new Claims 26-29. It is respectfully submitted that these claims are not indefinite, and it is requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §102

Claim 22

The Examiner also rejects Claim 22 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Schwartz et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As explained above, Applicants have canceled Claim 22 and added new independent Claim 26. Claim 26 is directed to an apparatus for manufacturing photomask blanks comprising a sputtering chamber, a load lock chamber, an unload lock chamber and a substrate conveying means. The sputtering chamber is such that only one substrate at a time is introduced therein for forming a film on the substrate. In order to form films on all the substrates under the same conditions, the load lock chamber is designed so as to be able to draw a vacuum to a predetermined pressure each time before the substrate is introduced into the sputtering chamber. As a result, the inside of the load lock chamber is set at a predetermined degree of vacuum, and the substrates are introduced into the sputtering chamber one by one at a constant interval.

In contrast, Schwartz is directed to a sputtering chamber in which multiple discs are introduced at a time and in which at least two magnetrons are used to metalize two discs simultaneously. Hence, this is very different than the apparatus of Claim 26 in which the sputtering chamber is such that only one disc is introduced at a time. In addition, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Schwartz of a load lock chamber which is able to draw a vacuum to a predetermined

pressure each time before the substrate is introduced into the sputtering chamber, wherein the substrates are introduced one by one at a constant interval, as in the claimed invention.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Schwartz does not disclose or suggest the apparatus of Claim 26, and the claim is patentable thereover. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 23 and 24

The Examiner also rejects Claims 23 and 24 under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by Sakai. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In particular, Sakai is a published application which was filed on July 31, 2001. The present application is a divisional of USSN 09/952,445 filed on September 12, 2001. The parent application and this application claim priority under 35 USC §119 to Japanese application no. 2000-277354 filed on September 12, 2000 in Japan (a certified copy of this priority application was filed in the parent application). Accordingly, Sakai is not prior art to the present application under 35 USC §102. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

Conclusion

Accordingly, for at least the above-stated reasons, the present application is now in a condition for allowance and should be allowed.

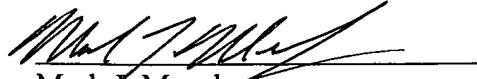
If any fee is due for this amendment, please charge our deposit account 50/1039.

Favorable reconsideration is earnestly solicited.

Date:

January 13, 2005

Respectfully submitted,



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